

## **ABSENCE WITHOUT LEAVE (AWOL) POLICY**

### **1. Policy Statement**

- 1.1 This policy outlines the process that will be undertaken in the event that an employee is absent from work without authorised leave.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there is a fair and consistent approach handling unauthorised absences across the company, and that managers discharge their duty with care to their employees.

### **2 Scope of Policy**

2.1 This policy on unauthorised absence without leave applies to all employees. It applies if an employee:

- Fails to comply with the sickness absence reporting procedure (or to provide the required evidence within the required time period.)
- Fails to attend work.
- Fails to return from holiday
- Is absent from work for any other reason without permission.

2.2 If an employee is absent from work without a good cause and/or fails to properly and effectively notify the manager of his/her absence, this may be treated as a serious disciplinary offense, potentially constituting gross misconduct.

### **3. Principles**

3.1 Employees have a duty to be at work in accordance with the agreed working practices, unless authorisation has been given for absence, and they are required to tell their manager if they are unable to attend work as a result of illness or other unforeseen circumstances. Failure to be at work and to report absence may be an act of gross misconduct and potentially a breach of contract.

3.2 Managers will treat each case individually and be mindful of the need for consistency in their approach. Consideration should be given to the employer's duty of care to employees and the employee's past history (have there been previous cases of absenteeism, or is the situation out of character for them).

3.3 An employee will be considered as AWOL when they are absent from work and have not contacted their manager or any other nominated person to advise the absence from work.

### **4. The Procedure**

4.1 Where an employee appears to be AWOL, the following procedure should be applied. This procedure will be applied after initial attempts to contact the employee, as outlined below, have been successful.

4.2 The application of this procedure could result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee, including the termination of the employee's contract. For this reason, the manager must contact the Human Resources department and advisor prior to implementing this procedure and issuing any correspondence. All letters in association with the procedure are available from the Human Resources department.

TIMELINE	ACTIONS
<b>Working Day 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The manager will try to make telephone contact with the employee, and keep notes including the date, time and duration of the message left, as well as whether or not a response was received (the response should also be kept for records).</li> <li>• If the manager has been unable to contact the employee by the afternoon of the first day of unauthorised absence, efforts will be made to contact the employee's next of kin/emergency contact.</li> <li>• The next of kin/emergency contact should be asked to contact the manager in the event that the employee is located and unable to make contact themselves.</li> </ul>
<b>Day 2 of Absence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The manager will try and make telephonic contact with the employee again, and keep notes as stated above.</li> <li>• If unable to make contact, the manager will send a letter by recorded delivery, and also by standard post. A copy should also be delivered by hand, to the employee's last known address wherever practical.</li> <li>• The letter will remind the employee of the absence reporting procedure and ask them to make contact.</li> <li>• The letter will notify the employee that no salary will be paid for the unauthorised days unless medically certified and remind them that being AWOL may result in pay being suspended and that disciplinary action will be taken if no contact is made.</li> </ul>
<b>Day 4 of Absence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If no contact has been made, the manager will try to make telephone contact with the employee again, and must keep notes as stated above.</li> <li>• If contact cannot be made, the manager will send a second letter by recorded delivery and standard post. A copy should also be delivered by hand to the employees last known address where practical.</li> <li>• The letter will ask the employee to make contact urgently, and will advise that if no medical evidence is provided, or</li> </ul>

	<p>if contact is not made by a particular date, their pay will be stopped or suspended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It will state again that being AWOL may be considered an act of gross misconduct, which may result in disciplinary action being taken if they fail to make contact.</li> </ul> <p><b>Important Payroll action:</b> Managers must ensure that prompt action is taken where it is necessary to suspend pay.</p>
<b>Day 7 of Absence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The manager will try and make telephonic contact with the employee again, and keep notes as stated above.</li> <li>If contact cannot be made, the manager will send a second letter by recorded delivery and standard post. A copy should also be delivered by hand to the employees last known address where practical.</li> <li>The letter will give precise dates of unauthorised absence and explain actions taken so far to contact the employee.</li> <li>The letter will call the employee to a disciplinary hearing for Gross Misconduct (providing 7 calendar days' notice of the hearing) and clarifying that if they do not attend or provide reason for their continued absence, the hearing will proceed without them.</li> <li>The letter will advise the employee of their right to be accompanied at the hearing.</li> </ul>
<b>After 14 days of Absence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The hearing will be convened no earlier than 7 calendar days, after working day 7.</li> <li>The disciplinary hearing for Gross Misconduct will be held involving a manager with the authority to dismiss an employee and terminate their contract.</li> </ul>

4.3 The letters referred to above can be obtained from the Human Resources department.

4.4 In all steps of this policy the manager may delegate responsibility to a nominated colleague to undertake the attempts at contact on their behalf. Where an email address is known for an employee this may be used as an additional method of communication.

## 5. Next Steps

5.1 In accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure, where the employee does not attend the disciplinary hearing or provide any explanation for their continued absence, after the hearing is concluded, a letter will be sent to the

employee to summarily dismiss them on the grounds of gross misconduct. This will include a request for the return of any company equipment or property.

5.2 The letter will be sent by recorded delivery to last known address and also by standard post. A copy will also be delivered by hand to the employees last known address wherever practical.

5.3 The letter will include the employee's Right to Appeal in accordance with the Appeals Against Dismissal Policy.

5.4 The employee's date of termination will be the date the decision was taken to dismiss them. As the dismissal is for gross misconduct, no notice will be given or payments made.

5.5 Following dismissal, the manager is responsible for advising payroll of the termination date, and of any outstanding leave. They are also responsible for ensuring that the appropriate departments are advised.

## 6. Considerations

6.1 If the employee gets in touch or returns to work at any stage of this procedure the line manager must meet with them to discuss the absence and why no contact was made. The Human Resources Advisor must be contacted to discuss whether it is appropriate to arrange for a disciplinary hearing to be convened if the reason given for the unauthorised absence is not satisfactory.

6.2 If pay was suspended during the unauthorised absence, the department manager must contact payroll if the employee returns to ensure that pay resumes.

6.3 Where the absence was not certified or there is no satisfactory reason for the employee not seeking authorisation for the absence, pay deducted for the days the employee was absent without authorised leave will not be reinstated.

## 7. Review and Policy Monitoring

7.1 This policy and procedure will be reviewed and its effectiveness evaluated periodically. The Company retains the discretion to review it at any time and consult as appropriate.

<b>Name of Policy</b>	Absent Without Authorised Leave (AWOL) Policy
<b>Person or Department Responsible</b>	
<b>Date Approved or Adopted</b>	
<b>Approved by</b>	